



Kimberly A. Foster
Executive Director

LOS ANGELES COUNTY COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

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ADELINA SORKIN, LCSW/ACSW, CHAIR
DR. HARRIETTE F. WILLIAMS

APPROVED MINUTES

The General Meeting of the Commission for Children and Families was held on Monday, **July 20, 2009**, in Room 739 of the Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration, 500 West Temple Street, Los Angeles. **Please note that these minutes are intended as a summary and not as a verbatim accounting or transcription of events at this meeting.**

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT (Quorum Established)

Carol O. Biondi	Tina Pedersen
Susan Friedman	Martha Trevino Powell
Dr. La-Doris McClaney	Sandra Rudnick
Rev. Cecil Murray	Stacey Savelle
Steven M. Olivas, Esq.	Adelina Sorkin

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT (Excused/Unexcused)

Patricia Curry	Helen Kleinberg
Ann Franzen	Dr. Harriette F. Williams

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair Sorkin.

II. INTRODUCTIONS

Self introductions were made.

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Action

Motion by Commissioner Biondi, seconded by Commissioner Rudnick, the Agenda for July 20, 2009 was unanimously approved.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- **June 1, 2009**
- **June 15, 2009**

Action

Motion by Commissioner McClaney, seconded by Commissioner Rudnick, the Minutes for both June 1, 2009 and June 15, 2009 were unanimously approved.

V. CHAIR'S REPORT

Chair Sorkin reported that the Board of Supervisors passed a Motion on June 9, 2009 instructing the CEO to review the current Commissions and report back on September 30, 2009 regarding a plan to consolidate Commissions with overlapping missions, vision and work product whose budgets, if preserved, may compete with funding for core direct services to children and families.

Chair Sorkin informed the Commission that at the last Joint Children's Commissions meeting, the Children's Council announced that after September 30, 2009, they would no longer exist in its present form. Sharon Watson, the Executive Director of the Children's Council, has also announced her resignation effective October 2009.

Chair Sorkin reported The California Child Welfare Council (CCWC) is requesting public comment on its draft recommendations. The four priority areas for the Council are Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI), Permanency, Child Development and Successful Youth, and Data Linkage and Information Sharing. Public Comment will be received through July 23, 2009.

Chair Sorkin announced that Commissioner Martha Trevino Powell has agreed to Chair the Nomination Committee for the 2009-2010 Elections.

Commissioners were asked to mark their calendars for the following:

- August 6, 2009 – Supervisor Antonovich will be hosting “All for the Love of Kids” at the Arboretum.
- September 21, 2009 – Nomination Committee will present the election slate of officers.
- October 5, 2009 - Commission will vote on officers for 2009-2010.
- November 2, 2009 - Commission will meet for its annual meeting.

VI. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Kim Foster stated that she is working with three Commissioners on the Annual Report. They have recommended:

- Streamline the Annual Report
- Set an overall goal or theme
- Indicate specific accomplishments
- Include input from all Commissioners
- Include a section on the unique role of the Commission
- Include a Message From the Chair

The Executive Director informed the Commissioners that the County has changed the voicemail carrier for the Commission office and some temporary glitches occurred in the system and there may have been delays in the office receiving its messages last week.

The Executive Director stated that she will provide information to Commissioner Trevino-Powell that is pertinent to the Commission elections for those who may wish to run for office.

The Executive Director also stated that the Commission office is receiving a new photocopier/printer as the lease expired on the previous machine.

VII. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

DCFS Director, Trish Ploehn gave an update on the State Budget and its impact. She indicated that the budget appears close to becoming final. There are however, some changes being discussed such as the proposed total eradication of child welfare programs such as Cal WORKS, and discussion on the partial elimination of benefits such as child care that will necessitate additional cuts in other areas. She further reported there is still \$1.9 billion in cuts needed for the State budget, and \$300 million for Los Angeles County. Director Ploehn stated that County departments have already undergone two rounds of budget cuts and anticipate a third round in September with the revised budget.

Commissioner Trevino-Powell inquired about the status of the stimulus funds. Director Ploehn stated that DCFS does not have much detail as the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) and the Department of Community and Senior Services (DCSS) are the lead departments. She did however state that TAY youth are currently being hired, and that the DCFS recommendation to continue welfare benefits for housing families to facilitate reunification remains in the discussion stage.

In response to a Commission inquiry regarding the IV-E Waiver and Director Ploehn stated that she and the Child Welfare Director from Alameda County submitted a letter to the State stating their rationale for being excluded in any State Child Welfare cuts. She also stated there has been fiscal and programmatic success in years one and two and they will also have money to reinvest in year three.

Commissioner Biondi stated that the Commission was very instrumental in getting the waiver in Los Angeles County and suggested including the information in the Annual Report.

Director Ploehn announced that there is a Press Release on Supervisor Molina's website regarding the First District Education Pilot Project in Pomona and Montebello Unified School Districts. There are 80 foster youth participating in the project, 19 graduating seniors, with all but four going to either a two or four year college. Director Ploehn stated that without this program, approximately half would not have had the necessary credits to graduate. The students were all honored at the Board of Supervisors' meeting on July 7, 2009 and Supervisor Molina asked how they can get the focus on education for probation and child welfare youth. Director Ploehn stated that DCFS is adding well-being as a major

goal with health, mental health and education as major focuses of the Department in the next year.

Commissioner Friedman inquired about the status of the report requested by the Board of Supervisors on the 14 child fatalities in 2008, and if copies are available. Director Ploehn stated that DCFS has submitted two reports; a report on disciplinary actions of staff involved in the child fatality cases, as requested by Supervisor Antonovich and a separate report on 6-7 specific areas, as requested by Supervisors Ridley-Thomas and Yaroslavsky. She informed the Commission that the reports were submitted to the CEO and once they are forwarded to the Board they will become public documents and available to the Commission.

Director Ploehn invited the Commission to the grand opening of the new DCFS office in West L.A., 5757 Wilshire Blvd., on Thursday, July 23, 2009, at 3:00 p.m. She also invited the Commissioners to participate in the SIP meeting on July 29, 2009, 1:00 p.m., at the Shriners Hospital for children.

Follow-Up

Director Ploehn offered to have DCFS give a presentation on the success in year two of the IV-E Waiver, once the final numbers are available.

VIII. PRESENTATION – CALIFORNIA ENDOWMENT HEALTHY RETURNS INITIATIVE

Andrea Gordon, from the Probation Department, gave a brief background summary of the Healthy Returns Initiative (HRI) Program, discussed the types of services provided and how they engage and educate families regarding the youth's needs. HRI provides partnerships between county agencies, courts, local law enforcement agencies, schools and community-based organizations to assist youth in probation camps in transitioning back to their families and the community. The most common mental health diagnoses for these youth are: depression, bipolar, and some co-occurring disorders such as substance abuse and hyper-activity. They link the youth and their families to low cost or no cost services and continue to re-link until the services stick.

Commissioner Rudnick inquired about follow-up services once the youth leave the program and if they come back into the system. Ms. Gordon stated that the youth remain attached to the HRI program for six months after leaving; afterwards it is the case carrying Deputy Probation Officer who has sole responsibility for the case. She also informed the Commission that one of the goals of HRI is to create independence for the youth and their families and teach them to link themselves to the services they need in the community. She stated that most are still in the system when they leave and are able to remain in the system until they turn 18 years old or 25 years old for TAY youth. Commissioner Rudnick inquired if they are able to fundamentally change the way these youth function. Ms. Gordon reported that based upon the child's/youth's particular illness, you may not be able to fundamentally change them. However, the way the family works with the youth; the types of services provided, and the level of isolation will change.

The Commission was also provided case examples of the types of referrals received by the program. Commissioner Biondi stated that the Los Angeles Risk and Resiliency Checklist (LARRC) is a huge systemic problem because it is done at intake without other information and is not done again for six months, except for Gonzales. She also stated that in the case sample discussed, the family should not be billed for juvenile hall time, since the crime was “assault of parent”.

Also, the following statistical data was provided:

62 youth enrolled in HRI – 31% DCFS kids – 60% graduation rate from program

During HRI-

- 94% reduction in Juvenile Hall days
- 79% reduction in Suitable Placement days
- 0 detained in camp during HRI
- Total: 90% reduction in out-of-home days

6 months post HRI Graduation:

- 83% reduction in Juvenile Hall days
- 93% reduction in Suitable Placement days
- 40% reduction in Camp days
- Total: 84% reduction in out-of-home days

Commissioner Friedman inquired about the status of the program. Ms. Gordon stated that funding ends in December 2009. They have applied for a Bureau of Justice Assistance Grant for collaborative mental health and criminal justice programs. Ms. Gordon is also hoping that Probation will continue the program on its own. Commissioner Biondi offered the Commission’s assistance in recommending continuation of the program.

Follow-Up

Ms. Gordon stated that she would get the Commissioners an analysis of the HRI budget with calculated savings.

IX. PRESENTATION – MULTIDISCIPLINARY ASSESSMENT TEAM (MAT)

Chair Sorkin introduced Dr. Sophy and his panel of presenters and stated that in 1998 the Commission was given a report titled, Multidisciplinary Assessment for Children in Foster Care, and she was pleased that DCFS and DMH is moving forward with this program. Dr. Sophy, DCFS gave a brief introduction of the program. Adrienne Olson, DCFS gave a broad overview of the Multidisciplinary Assessment Team (MAT) Program. She discussed MAT as a collaborative effort between DCFS, DMH, and other community providers designed to ensure the immediate and comprehensive assessment of children/youth entering out-of-home placement. The screening/assessment is done within 45 days of referral, and those not eligible are still screened and referred to treatment outside of MAT. When a child is detained, he/she is eligible to receive a MAT assessment through DCFS, to make sure that all child/family needs are assessed when a child/youth enters foster care.

MAT assessments address the following areas:

- Medical
- Dental
- Developmental
- Hearing/language
- Education
- Mental health
- Vocational
- Family/caregiver

MAT Program Goals:

- Provide timely assessments
- Provide comprehensive assessments
- Identify strengths and needs
- Identify resources for each need

MAT is part of the Coordinated Services Action Team (CSAT), which has three tracks of entry: Track One – All new detentions (Court), Track Two – All new cases (FM, VFM and VFR), and Track Three – All existing cases. MAT is currently operational in all SPAs except for SPA 5, which will be operational in October 2009.

Commissioner Rudnick inquired if treatment includes psychotropic medication. Dr. Sophy stated that anyone on medication is tracked as part of the court protocol, however psychotropic medication is not included in this treatment. Chair Sorkin inquired about accountability when team members report to different departments. Ms. Olson stated that DCFS has ultimate responsibility to ensure that needs are being met but they also rely on DMH and work very closely together. Laura Andrade indicated that one of the challenges for MAT is the fact that the majority of new detentions are children 0-5 years old.

X. PUBLIC COMMENT

Ivy Carey, of the Children's Law Center, inquired which children will fall outside of DCFS eligibility and what needs to be included in the Minute Order for eligibility. Adrienne Olson, DCFS stated that eligibility is based on Medicaid/Medi-Cal federal eligibility. If children are not eligible, they will still be screened and if found positive, they will refer to DMH co-located staff and will find other means of assessment and treatment outside of MAT. In terms of consent, there are policies and procedures that are followed beginning with a voluntary form for parents to sign, if parents do not consent or are not available, they use standardized language to go to the court to request consent.

XI. ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no Announcements.

XII. ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned by Chair Sorkin.